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AFRICA

Contents

INTRODUCTION xiii

THE COUNTRY AND ITS PEOPLE 1
Periodicals 5

GEOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY 10
Geography and climate 10
Periodical 13
Geology and natural resources 14
Periodical 16
Maps and atlases 17
Travel guides 23

FLORA AND FAUNA 26
Flora 26
Fauna 29

PREHISTORY AND ARCHAEOLOGY 34
Periodicals 40

EXPLORERS', TRAVELLERS' AND MISSIONARIES' ACCOUNTS 43

HISTORY 48
General and regional 48
Colonial Gold Coast 58
Periodicals 76

POPULATION 82
Demography and migration 82
Censuses 88

ETHNIC GROUPS 92
General 92
Akan 97
Asante (Ashanti) 97
Fante (Fanti) 117
Other groups 120

Ewe 122
Ga 124
Gonja 127
Tallensi 129
Other groups 130
Periodical 134

LANGUAGES AND DIALECTS 138
General 138
Akan 139
Other languages 143
Periodicals 146

RELIGION 151

SOCIETY AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS 159

HEALTH 166
Periodicals 176

POLITICS 180
General 180
Kwame Nkrumah 200

CONSTITUTION AND LEGAL AND JUDICIAL SYSTEMS 212
Periodical 219

ADMINISTRATION AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT 223
Periodical 224

FOREIGN RELATIONS 226
Periodical 228

ECONOMY 231
Periodicals 243

FINANCE AND BANKING 249

TRADE AND COMMERCE 252

INDUSTRY 258
General 258
The Volta River Project 261

AGRICULTURE, FOOD POLICY AND NUTRITION 265
Periodical 270

EMPLOYMENT AND MANPOWER 276

LABOUR MOVEMENT AND TRADE UNIONS 279
Periodical 281

STATISTICS 282
Periodicals 283

EDUCATION 287
Periodicals 290

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY 293

LITERATURE 295
Literary history and criticism 295
Performing arts 299
Anthologies 300
Ama Ata Aidoo 301
Ayi Kwei Armah 302
Kofi Awoonor 304
Other writers 305
Periodicals 310

THE ARTS 314
General 314
Periodical 320
Visual arts 320
Architecture 327
Cookery 329
Festivals 330
Film 331
Folklore 332
Music and dance 334
Pottery 341
Textiles, dress and ornamentation 341

ARCHIVES, LIBRARIES AND MUSEUMS 346
Periodicals 352

BOOKS AND PUBLISHING 355
Periodicals 356

MASS MEDIA 358

GENERAL PERIODICALS AND NEWSPAPERS 361

PROFESSIONAL PERIODICALS 364

ENCYCLOPAEDIAS AND DIRECTORIES 370
Periodicals 372

Contents

BIBLIOGRAPHIES 375
Periodicals 382

INDEX OF AUTHORS, TITLES AND SUBJECTS 389

MAP OF GHANA 437

Introduction

The Republic of Ghana is located in West Africa, surrounded by the Francophone countries of Côte d'Ivoire (formerly the Ivory Coast) to the west, Burkina Faso (formerly Upper Volta) to the north, Togo to the east and 537 kilometres (334 miles) of coastline along the Gulf of Guinea to the south. Its relatively small size belies its historical, political and economic importance in the region, the continent and abroad although its colonial name, 'Gold Coast', hints at this.

After Nigeria, Ghana is the second largest of the former British colonies in West Africa. Ghana's land area of 238,533 square kilometres (92,098 square miles) makes the country slightly smaller than the United Kingdom and about twice the size of the American state of Pennsylvania. Its north-south distance stretches approximately 480-650 kilometres (300-400 miles), while the east-west distance is 320-400 kilometres (200-250 miles). Most of Ghana is low in elevation with about one-half the country less than 150 metres (500 feet) above sea level. Along the Ghana-Togo border run the Akwapim-Togo Ranges with the country's highest peaks: Mt. Afadjato (885 metres; 2,903 feet); Mt. Djebobo (876 metres; 2,874 feet) and Mt. Torogbani (872 metres; 2,861 feet).

Located roughly 640 kilometres (400 miles) north of the equator, southern Ghana benefits from moist Atlantic air bringing rainy periods during the months of April to July and September to November; during the cooler months from December to February, drying, dust-laden harmattan winds blow down from the Sahara Desert. The lower one-third of the country is classified as a 'forest zone', with rain forest occupying approximately three per cent and 'moist forest' another thirty-one per cent of the land. Numerous species of valuable hardwoods occur in the forests but logging and ever-expanding patterns of shifting cultivation have significantly reduced the forested areas over the last several decades. The rate of degradation of the high forest is currently estimated at two per cent per year. Savanna lands, including a narrow belt along the coast and the northern half

Index

The index is a single alphabetical sequence of authors (personal and corporate), titles of publications and subjects. Index entries refer both to the main items and to other works mentioned in the note to each item. Title entries are in italics. Numbers refer to bibliographic entries.

A

Aardema, V. 679
Abarry, A. 680
Abban, J. B. 469
Abbey, J. L.S. 464
Abbot, M. 312
ABECOR Country Report: Ghana 501
Abedi-Boafo, J. 305
Abisa festival: a Ghanaian (Nzema) music institution 671
Ablorh-Odjidja, J. R. 308
Aboa, S. K. 5
Aboakyer-deer hunt festival of the Effutus 668
Abomoso 33
Abortion 326
Abruquah, J. W. 607
Abuakwa
  politics 375
Abu-Lughod, I. 249
Accam, T. N. 314
Accam, T. N. N. 305
Account of the Gold Coast of Africa, with a brief history of the African Company 172
Account of two missionary voyages 102
Accra 49, 101-02, 267
  Akan civil servants 236
  bibliography 760
  civil service 210
  class formation 336
  earthquake 30, 36
  health 353
  history 57, 100, 722
  housing 659
  Islam 321
  language 299, 308
  maps 15, 38-40, 44, 47, 49, 53, 55, 57, 448
  mental healing 352
  Richard Burton at 97
  tourism 50, 57
  travel guide 53, 57
  voluntary associations 339
  women 335, 559
  Yoruba musicians 699
  see also Ga
Accra city handbook 57
Acheampong, I. K. 57, 123, 179, 376, 390, 410, 518, 558
  highlife songs 683
Achebe, C. 568
Achimota 128
  archaeology 84
Achimota: the early years, 1924-1948 551
Achimota in the national setting: a unique educational experiment in West Africa 551
Achimota School 72, 88, 183, 233, 418, 555, 580, 612, 718
  art department 625
  carver 651
  history 551
Ackah, C. A. 746
Acquaah, F. A. A. 27
Acquah, B. 564
Acquaye, E. 469
Active history of Ghana 113
Adaba, G. 334
Adali-Mortty, G. 566, 573-75
Adamafio, T. 408
Adamasi, M. T. 45
Adams, C. 757
Adams, C. D. 63
Adams, D. T. 18
Adams, J. 15
Adangme 232
  land tenure 448
Adangme vocabularies, including a Klama vocabulary 314
Adansi-Pipim, G. 199
Addae, O. K. 738
Addey, P. 506
Addo, A. 663
Addo, D. Y. 564
Addo, J. N. O. 564
Addo, N. O. 188, 208
Addo, P. H. 564-65
Addo, S. T. 28
Addo-Fening, R. 114, 131, 751
Addy, P. L. N. A. 533
Addy, Y. 681
Adei, S. 465
Adelugba, D. 570
Ademuwagun, Z. A. 340
Adimorah, E. N. 531
Adinkra symbols 2
Adjare, S. O. 515
Adjaye, J. K. 132, 213
Adjetey, C. F. 179
Administration 457-59
  bibliography 189
  civil servants 236
  map 467
Administration of Ghana's foreign relations, 1957-1965: a personal memoir 461
Adomako-Sarfoh, J. 200
Adom-Ampofo, K. 611
Adsakey, N. K. 2
Adu, A. L. 179

communist subversive activity in Africa – relations between Red China and Ghana (1964-1966) 462
Casely Hayford, Adelaide S. 159, 179, 564
Casely Hayford, G. 564, 586
Casely Hayford, J. E. 158-59, 169, 176, 179, 229, 332, 390, 401, 569
Cases in Akan law . . . Nana Sir Ofori Atta 219
Castles *see* Forts and castles
Catalogue of Ashanti art taken from Kumasi in the Anglo-Ashanti war of 1874 636
Catalogue of the Robert Goldwater Library 628
Catechist 570, 607
Catholic Voice 13
Censuses 201-05, 495
1931 201
1948 39, 202
1960 196, 203
1970 196, 204
1984 205
Central Bureau of Statistics 755
Central Intelligence Agency
maps 37
role in coup of 1966 430
Central Statistical Office 546
Certificate geography of West Africa 25
Challenge of Africa 327, 555
Chambers, R. 521
Changing economy of the Lower Volta, 1954-67 485
Changing social structure in Ghana: essays in the comparative sociology of a new state and an old tradition 210
Chantler, C. 9, 12
Chapman, E. 663
Chapman, K. C. 576
Chastain, M. L. 676
Chavunduka, G. L. 363
Chazan, N. 381-82, 396, 399-400, 527
Chernoff, J. M. 631, 684, 688
Chewing sticks 2
Chick, J. D. 729
Chiefs and politicians: the politics of regionalism in Northern Ghana 165
Children's books on Africa and their authors, an annotated bibliography 567
Children's fiction about Africa in English 567
Children's literature and audio-visual materials in Africa 567
Chinbuah, A. A. 469
Chinebuah, I. K. 303
Chowdhury, T. E. 479
Christaller, J. G. 206, 219, 238, 295, 297, 573
Christensen, J. B. 253, 573
Christian Protten's 1764 Introduction to the Fante and Accra (Ga) languages 303
Christianborg Castle *see* Forts and castles
Christlieb, T. 102
Chronicles from Gonja: a tradition of West African Muslim historiography 275
Chronology of oral tradition: . . . 213, 224
Chukwukere, B. I. 505
Chung, K. 462
Church, R. J. H. 3, 19, 25
Civil service 397, 457-59
Civil Service Act 1960 388
Claridge, E. 102
Claridge, W. W. 111, 169
Clark, G. 471
Clark, J. D. 125
Class, power and ideology in Ghana: the railwaymen of Sekondi 543
Class struggle in Africa 425
Clayton, A. 157
Clegg, S. 736
Clems, D. 564
Cleveland, D. A. 197
Clifford, Hugh C. 111, 144, 238, 410
Clifford, Lady 144
Clignet, R. 384
Climate 27, 39, 529, 536
Akwapim 258
bibliographies 762, 765
historical 142-43
maps 43
Climates of West Africa 27
Climatic maps of Ghana for agriculture 27
Cloth 2
Asante 231, 703, 706
see also Textiles
Clothed in symbol: the art of Adinkra among the Akan of Ghana 706
Cobbe, J. 400, 478
Cochrane, S. H. 199
Cochrane, T. W. 522
Cocoa 7, 19, 28, 136, 398, 467, 478, 509, 511, 528, 536, 547
bibliographies 528, 533, 536, 761-62, 765
economy 479, 532
farming 136, 258, 473, 477, 528, 532
female labour force 489
history 477, 495, 524, 528
Koransang farm 526
market system 404, 477, 532
politics 378, 383, 477
production 534
maps 194
social change 528, 532
statistics 509, 534, 547, 549-50
tax 502
Cocoa and chaos in Ghana 532
Cocoa and social change in Ghana: a study of development in the Sunyani District 532
Cocoa comes to Mampong: . . . 598

Cocoa in Ghana 20
Cocoa industry
migrant workers 200
Cocoa Marketing Board
laws 442
Cocoa Research Institute 533
Cocoa to 1993: a commodity in crisis 534
Cohan, R. 275
Cohen, A. 241
Cohen, R. 540-41, 543
Coker, W. Z. 67
Cole, H. M. 225, 616-19, 624
Cole, J. I. 412
Cole, L. R. 258
Cole-King, S. 350
Coleman, J. S. 372
Collected field reports on the phonology of Basari 312
Collected field reports on the phonology of Kasem 312
Collected field reports on the phonology of Kondomba 312
Collected Language Notes 312
Colling, E. 716
Collins, E. J. 570, 572
Collins, J. 685-87
Colonial governors from the fifteenth century to the present 123
Colonialism and change: essays presnted to Lucy Mair 393
Colonialism and underdevelopment in Ghana 161
Colonialism in Africa, 1870-1960. Volume 5. A bibliographical guide to colonialism in sub-Saharan Africa 764
Come back Dora! 604
Come to laugh: a study of African traditional theatre in Ghana, . . . 572
Commins, S. K. 527
Commodity exports and African development 509
Commonwealth Universities Yearbook 552
Community literacy programmes in northern Ghana 558
Comparative study of Ga and Adangme with special reference to the verb 308
Compilation, analysis, and adaptation of selected Ghanaian folktale songs . . . general music class 693
Comprehensive geography of West Africa 25
Cond, J. 200
Condua-Harley, J. E. 145
Conflict and the common good 393
Conover, H. F. 764, 776
Consciencism: philosophy and ideology for decolonization and development with particular reference to the African revolution 421
Constitution and government of Ghana 449
Constitution of the Republic of Ghana, 1979 437
Constitutional law of Ghana 449
Constitutions 148, 372, 375, 397, 411, 418, 439, 442, 444, 449
1925 183
1960 373
1979 437
Ahanta and Krepi 261
Akim Abuakwa 219
Ashanti 240
bibliography 457
Burns (1946) 126
Fantee Confederacy 158
and laws 434-56
Contemporary art in Africa 623
Contemporary West African states 386, 398
Contexts of kinship: an essay in the family sociology of the Gonja of northern Ghana 273
Continuity and change 228
Continuity and change in African cultures 253
Continuity and change in Ghanaian Kasena flute and drum ensemble music: . . . Nima/Acrra 692
Contractual obligations in Ghana and Nigeria 455
Convention People's Party 412
constitution 418
Cook, A. 511
Cook, P. L. 68
Cookery 663-67
Cooking, cuisine and class: a study in comparative sociology 274
Coomassie and Magdala: the story of two British campaigns in Africa 143
Coombs, D. 146
Coon, K. 511
Cooper, H. 143
Cooper, W. G. G. 36
Cooperatives & development: agricultural politics in Ghana and Uganda 404
Coping with Africa's food crisis 527
Coping with uncertainty 396
Coplan, D. 687
Corbin, G. A. 623
Coronel, M. A. 616
Coronel, P. C. 616
Corpus of early Arabic sources for West African history 122
Corruption 208, 386, 388, 478, 494
Côte d'Ivoire *see* Ivory Coast

Ghana Museums and Monuments Board 4, 17, 166, 724
Ghana – music, dance and drama: a review of the performing arts of Ghana 697
Ghana National Bibliography 761, 779
Ghana National Bibliography Bi-monthly 779
Ghana News 464
Ghana News Agency 726
Ghana: Nkrumah's legacy 408
Ghana 1957-1966: the politics of institutional dualism 407
Ghana Notes and Queries: . . . 184
Ghana nutrition and cookery 664
Ghana observed: essays on the politics of a West African republic 374
Ghana: an Official Handbook 17
Ghana past and present 9
Ghana: the people, the laws and the courts 434
Ghana: policies and program for adjustment 479
Ghana: politics, economics and society 399
Ghana: the political economy of recovery 400
Ghana population atlas: . . . 194
Ghana, post report 15
Ghana praise 689
Ghana: profile of agricultural potential 524
Ghana Psychic and Traditional Healers Association 363, 366
Ghana recipe book 666
Ghana Registered Nurses' Association 367
Ghana resurgent 113
Ghana revolution: background account from a personal perspective 376
Ghana revolution, from Nkrumah to Jerry Rawlings 377
Ghana, the road to independence, 1919-1957 141
Ghana Science Association 743
Ghana semi-tones: a collection of 18 new poems 598
Ghana, Sierra Leone & The Gambia: a basic annotated bibliography . . . 757
Ghana sings 595
Ghana Social Science Journal 744
Ghana Society of Writers 611
Ghana Stock Exchange 506
Ghana story 9
Ghana Studies Bulletin 745
Ghana talks 114
Ghana Teachers' Journal 560
Ghana Timber Marketing Board 517
Ghana today 11
Ghana Tourist Board 51
Ghana Trade Union Congress 542
Ghana: a travel guide, supplementary notes on Togo. 1976-77 edition 53
Ghana under military rule, 1966-1969 397
Ghana who's who 2
Ghanaian 734
Ghanaian businessmen: from artisan to capitalist entrepreneur in a dependent economy 508
Ghanaian entrepreneur: studies in trading in Ghana 474
Ghanaian factory worker: industrial man in Africa 516
Ghanaian favourite dishes 663
Ghanaian imaginative writings in English, 1950-1969 569
Ghanaian languages 293
Ghanaian literatures 570
Ghanaian Nurse 367
Ghanaian oral history. . . . Techiman traditional state . . . 247
Ghanaian's image of the missionary: . . . critiques of Christian missionaries by Ghanaians, 1897-1965 323
Ghanaian Times 735
Ghanaian wax print textiles: viewpoints of designers, distributors, sellers and consumers 703
Ghanaian writing: Ghana as seen by her own writers as well as by German authors 569
Ghanaian writing today 569
Ghana's First Republic, 1960-1966: the pursuit of the political kingdom 416
Ghana's foreign policy, 1957-1966: diplomacy, ideology, and the new state 463
Ghana's foreign trade, 1968-1978: trends and structures 510
Ghana's heritage of culture 613
Ghana's main towns and cities 48
Ghana's third city: Sekondi-Takoradi 54
Ghansa, D. K. 203
Gil, B. 203
Gilbert, F. F. 357
Gilbert, M. 320, 643
Gillespie, W. H. 157
Girls' nubility rites in Ashanti 239
Gjersten, D. 752
Gladwin, H. 254

Gledhill, D. 62
Glover, K. R. A. 412
Gocking, R. 256, 707
Godsey, L. D. 694
Gold
  Akan 638, 642
  Akan in 1717 wreck 637
  arts 642
  miners 540, 642
  mining 31, 34-36, 97, 484, 642, 707, 738
  mining press 729
  trade 95, 109, 115, 119, 162, 180, 225, 238
Gold Coast Akan 219
Gold Coast: Akan laws and customs and the Akim Abuakwa constitution 219
Gold Coast, Britain and the Netherlands, 1850-1874 146
Gold Coast. Census of population, 1948, report and tables 202
Gold Coast cocoa farmer: a preliminary survey 528
Gold Coast food 663
Gold Coast Gazette 776
Gold Coast handbook 16
Gold Coast in transition 372
Gold Coast land tenure 448
Gold Coast land tenure and the Forest Bill 159
Gold Coast Legislative Council 454
Gold Coast men of affairs (past and present) 179
Gold Coast Methodism 315
Gold Coast nation and national consciousness 401
Gold Coast native institutions with thoughts upon a healthy imperial policy for the Gold Coast and Ashanti 158
Gold Coast, 1931. A review of conditions . . . with a historical, ethnographical and sociological survey of the people of that country 201
Gold Coast past and present: a short description of the country and its people 168
Gold Coast Police, 1844-1938 157
Gold Coast railways: the making of a colonial economy, 1879-1929 495
Gold Coast revolution: the struggle of an African people from slavery to freedom 395
Gold Coast: a survey of the Gold Coast and British Togoland, 1919-1946 141
Gold Coast Times 731
Gold Coast yesterday and today 9
Gold of Africa: jewellery and ornaments from Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali and Senegal in the collection of the Barbier-Mueller Museum 642
Golden Stool: an account of the Ashanti war of 1900 145
Golden Stool: studies of the Asante center and periphery 242
Goldschmidt, J. E. 439
Goldschmidt, W. 659
Goldweights 143, 185, 225, 231, 238, 612-14, 621, 642
  Akan 645
  Asante 648
  erotic 639
  stone 93
Gomes, F. 130
Gonja 210, 271-75- 750
  archaeology 89
  chronology of kings 184
  fostering 742
  historiography 275
  history 184, 274-75, 282
  horses 212
  Islam 321
  language 310
  New Buipe 92
  pottery 89
  proverbs
  salt trade 119
Gonja: a phonological and grammatical study 310
Gonja proverbs 314
Goodheir, A. 689
Goodtime kings: emerging African pop 685
Goody, E. N. 210, 266, 273, 288, 742
Goody, J. 184, 210, 212, 234, 272-74, 279, 281-82, 289, 291, 314, 319, 321
Gordon, C. A. 99
Gordon, G. 350
Gordon, S. L. 509
Gorer, G. 101
Gould, P. R. 330
Government 1, 8, 15-17, 128, 738
  bibliographies 206, 761, 765, 772
  Gold Coast Legislative Council 454
  local 434, 457-59, 761
Government and politics in the Akuapem State, 1730-1850 164
Government in West Africa 128
Government publications relating to the Gold Coast, 1846-1957 772
Goyer, D. S. 205
Graesser, M. 375
Graham, C. K. 557
Graham, J. 53
Graham, R. 690
Graham, Y. 377
Grammar of the Asante and the Fante language, called Tshi [Chwee, Twi]: based on the Akuapem dialect . . . 297
Grammar of the Fante-Akan language 296
Grammatik der Ewe-Sprache 311

Languages *continued*
Arabic texts 275
and archaeology 87
Avatime 307
Awutu 302
Basari 312
Bible translator 96
bibliographies 206, 216, 292-94, 304, 306, 758, 761-62, 765
Central-Togo 293
Chokosi 314
Dagaari 312
Dagbani 292
Dangme 292, 305, 308
English 292
Esperanto 689
Ewe 263-65, 291-93, 306, 311-12
Fante 138, 292, 296-98, 303-04
foods 664
Frafra 312
Ga 268, 292, 295, 299, 303, 308, 641, 680
Ga-Dangme 293
Gbe 306
Gonja 292, 310
Grusi 282, 309
Guan 257, 302, 570
Guang 282, 310-13
Gur 293-94
Gwa 312
Hanga 312
Kasem 292, 312, 634
Kassena 280, 658
Klama 314
Konkomba 292, 312
Krachi 302
Kusal 312
Kwa 294
Larteh 302
Lefana 307
Ligbi 312
literacy programs 558
Mande 293
manuscripts in Basel Mission archives 711
maps 106, 201, 293-94, 312
Moor-Gurma 309
Nafaara 312
Nchimburu 312
need for uniformity 728
Nkonya 302
Northern Territories 285, 287, 292
Nzema 292, 303
pidgin 733
proverbs 144, 208, 219, 238, 295-96, 305, 570, 593
Tampulma 312
Togo-remnant 307
Twi 216, 219, 221, 227, 292, 295, 297-98, 300, 304, 590, 689, 698
Twi proverbs 219, 238, 295, 304
Vagala 312
Volta-Como 293, 302
Volta-Comoe 303
see also Akan; Proverbs
Languages of Africa 302
Languages of the Akan area: papers in western Kwa linguistics and on linguistic geography of ancient Begho 303
Languages of Ghana 293
Languages of West Africa 294, 302
Large mammals of West Africa 70
Larkin, G. V. 768
Larteh 148
language 302
social change 256
Laryea, L. M. D. 189
Last, M. 363
Latham, J. 688
Lauer, J. J. 768
Laughter and hubbub in the house 601
Lautré, M. 568
Law, R. 212
Law and social change in Ghana 444
Law and the status of women in Ghana 446
Lawani, S. M. 531
Lawrence, A. W. 140, 166
Laws 177
Akan 219
Ashanti 240, 452
bibliographies 758, 765
contract law 455
criminal 453
customary 394
Law of the Sea 468
Legislative Council 454
modernization 384
patent laws 455
traditional 221, 450-51
Laws and constitutions 434-56
history 438
quasi-judicial bodies 441
Lawson, G. W. 60, 63, 258
Lawson, R. M. 124, 485, 498
Lawyer who bungled his life 603
Lazarus, N. 566, 580
Lebanon
pluralism 403
Leeson, F. 74
Lefana, Akpafu and Avatime with English gloss 307
Lefever, E. W. 379
Legal, regulatory, and institutional aspects of environmental and national resources management in developing countries: a country study of Ghana 443
Legon Journal of Agriculture 537
Legon Observer 747
Legon theses: a checklist of theses and dissertations accepted for higher degrees by the University of Ghana, Legon, 1964-1977 763
Legum, C. 400, 416, 432, 754
Legvold, R. 462
Lehuard, R. 642
Leith, J. C. 486
Lent, B. 8
Leonard, P. 100
Lesaage, M. C. 74
Leston, D. 71
Let your voice be heard! Songs from Ghana and Zimbabwe, call-and response, . . . grades K-12 681
Letters on the political condition of the Gold Coast since . . . 1868 . . . Ashantee War, 1862-62, and the Awoonah War, 1866 160
Levasseru, A. A. 384
LeVine, V. 381, 388
Levtzion, N. 121-22, 272, 275
Lewin, T. J. 227
Liberia 398
cookbook 667
demography 200
economy 481
forest resources 517
Libraries 709-10, 712, 717, 719, 721, 723, 725-26, 764
Balme Library 717, 775
bibliographies 709, 721, 723, 758, 761, 765
history 710, 721
Research Library on African Affairs 779
rural services 709
social science 721
University of Exeter 712
University of Science & Technology Library 763
US Agency for International Development 776
Libraries in West Africa: a bibliography 721
Library resources for adult students in Ghana: . . . 717
Libschutz, M. R. 123
Life histories of African women 251
Life in Ghana 5
Life of Dr. J. E. K. Aggrey 557
Life on the Gold Coast 99
Lifschitz, E. 622
Limann, H. 389, 400, 431
Lime farmers 505
Lindfors, B. 567
Linguistic fieldnotes from Banda, and language maps of the Guang-speaking areas of Ghana, Togo and Dahomey 312
Linz, J. J. 382
Lions of Dagbon: change in northern Ghana 288
Lipenga, K. D. 571
Lipset, S. M. 382
Literary criticism and history 564-71, 586, 597
Literary society 608
Literature 159, 564-611
Akan 304
anthologies 574-75
bibliographies 206, 564, 567, 569-70, 758, 761-62, 765, 773, 777, 780
children's 1, 6-7, 10, 12, 228, 567
female writers 564
juvenile 1, 6-7, 10, 12, 228, 417, 567, 728, 758
vernacular 214, 304
Litto, F. M. 608
Littrell, M. A. 703
Livestock 22, 39, 529, 536
maps 45
Living conditions 8
Living Standards Survey 336
Lloyd, A. 156
Lobb, E. 570, 581
Lobi
songs 691
Local Studies Series 314
Locher, C. W. 295, 297
Lockwood, S. B. 776
LoDagaa 274
LoDagaba 281
Lofchie, M. F. 380, 527
Logic of writing and the organization of society 274
Lokko, S. 564
Lonsdale, J. 125
Lorentzon, L. 571
Lourie, I. M. 344, 357
Lovejoy, P. E. 119, 171
Lovell, H. 350
Lowe, M. 693
LoWiili 274, 281
Loxley, J. 487
Luckham, R. 375
Lumsden, D. P. 210
Lutterodt, C. H. 561
Lutterodt, S. A. 561
Lynch, H. R. 450-51
Lyons, G. R. L. 344
Lystad, R. A. 228

M

Maama 601
Mabey, S. J. 538
MacCarthy, C. 731
MacDonald, G. 168
Mack, J. 703
Mackenzie, K. 389
Mackworth-Praed, C. W. 66
Maclean, George 139, 173
Maclean, U. 366
Maclean of the Gold Coast: the life and times of George Maclean, 1801-1847 173
Macmillan, A. 170
Madubuike, I. 209
Maier, D. 215
Maier, D. J. E. 242, 284, 716
Mair, L. 269
Major Ghanaian fiction in English: a study of the novels of Ayi Kwei Armah and Kofi Awoonor 571
Majuto 592
Makers of modern Africa: profiles in history 179
Makers of modern Ghana 179
Mali
arts 623, 630, 635
Dogon trickster figure 678
gold arts 642
migration 200
military rule 379
Mopti 112
Soviet policy toward 462
Timbuktu 112
Mali Empire 121
Mampong 218
Mamprussi
Islam 321

Africa: policy-related studies on work and demographic issues 197
Sexual relationships and birthcontrol in Ghana: a case study of a rural town 326
Sexuality and health in sub-Saharan Africa: an annotated bibliography 359
Sey, K. 574
Shack, W. A. 241
Shadow of wealth 603
Shah, I. H. 199
Sharif, M. K. 196
Sharing the same bowl: a socioeconomic history of women and class in Accra, Ghana 270
Shaw, R. B. 402
Shaw, T. 88, 94, 127, 724
Shaw, T. M. 377, 527
Shell money of the slave trade 119
Sherman, N. P. 404
Shinnie, P. L. 85, 89, 242
Short geography of West Africa 24
Short history of education in British West Africa 555
Short history of the forts and castles of Ghana 181
Short history of Ghana 128
Short history of West Africa: A.D. 1000 to the present 129
Short manual of the Gold Coast 170
Shuey, B. 11
Sieber, R. 216, 617, 619, 626-627
Siegel, E. R. 402
Sierra Leone 101
  bibliography 757
  cookbook 667
  demography 200
  economy 481
  education 559
  laws and constitutions 442
  military rule 379
  politics 398
Sign-painting 644
Sillah, M-B. 377
Silver, H. R. 654
Silverman, R. A. 242-43, 624, 642, 655
Simensen, J. 131, 408, 720
Simon, J. C. 337
Simpson, D. 739
Sims, M. 768
Sinclair, J. 338
Singh, S. 199
Singing games from Ghana 693
Sinitsina, I. 452
Sir Charles Arden-Clarke 430
Sisaala xylophone tradition 283, 694
Sisala 283, 286
  carver 616
  language 312
  religion 286
Sisala sculpture of northern Ghana 283
Sissala
  architecture 658
Sitzman, G. L. 721
Size of the labour force and the structure of employment in Ghana 473
Skinner, E. P. 241
Sklar, R. L. 402
Slavery 171 *see also* History
Slawson, W. 688
Slinn, P. E. 452
Small mammals of West Africa 70
Small-scale farming: a selected and annotated bibliography with emphasis on Southeast Asia and West Africa 531
Smertin, Y. 431
Smiles, N. 312
Smillie, I. 494
Smit, A. F. J. 114
Smit, H. M. 775
Smith, A. P. 722
Smith, E. W. 557
Smith, E. Y. 573
Smith, F. T. 661, 701, 705
Smith, M. E. 253
Smith, N. 751
Smith, S. C. 706
Smock, A. C. 403
Smock, D. R. 403
Snakes 71, 74, 76
Snider, K. 313
Social change 210, 218
  family 186
Social change and the growth of British power in the Gold Coast: the Fante states, 1807-1874 167
Social change at Larteh, Ghana 257
Social conditions 199, 326-39, 467, 532, 742, 744
  Asante market women 471
  bibliographies 758, 761, 765, 771
  class formation 333, 336, 497
  class relations 471
  crime 744
  factory workers 516
  rural development 469, 477
  rural poverty 329
  statistics 507, 545-50
  trade unions 540-41, 543
  unemployment 516
  see also Housing; Women
Social economy of consumption 471
Social organisation of the LoWiili 282
Social organization of the Ga people 267
Social research in rural communities: the problems of fieldwork in Ghana 338
Social science libraries in West Africa: a directory 721
Social stratification 746
Social structure: studies presented by A. R. Radcliffe-Brown 222
Society and bureaucracy in contemporary Ghana 458
Soil maps of Ghana 42
Soils 529, 536
  bibliographies 761, 765
  maps 43-44
Solomon, A. C. 402
Solomon, R. F. 513
Some Akan fables 675
Some essential features of Nkrumaism 424
Songsore, J. 28
Sons and daughters 596
Sosuh, S. W. K. 545
Southon, A. E. 315
Soviet policy in West Africa 462
Soyinka, W. 108, 568, 575
Spark 424
Spark: from Kwame Nkrumah to Hilla Limann 431
Spatial organisation of culture 83
Spear and scepter: army, police, and politics in tropical Africa 379
Spears, E. 729
Special warfare area handbook for Ghana 8
Spencer, N. A. 571
Spio-Garbrah, E. 564
Spirits without boundaries: twenty-six terracotta single heads from Komaland, Ghana. . . . 633
Spirit-seekers: new religious movements in southern Ghana 325
Sports 17
  Ashanti Region 214
  boxing 737
Sports Star 735
Sprat, D. 312
Spratt, N. 312
Sprigge, R. G. S. 312
Srivastava, M. L. 200
Stahl, A. B. 90
Stanford, L. 312
Stanford, R. 312
Staniland, M. 288
Stanley, H. M. 143
Stanley, J. L. 622, 628
State and agriculture in Africa 527
State and rural class formation in Ghana: a comparative analysis 333
State of the nations 380
Statistics 16, 39, 467, 484, 545-50, 750, 753
  agriculture 481, 484, 507, 511, 536, 547, 549-50
  census 201-05
  demographic 200
  development plan 476
  economy 473, 476, 478-79, 481, 490, 499, 501-04, 507, 545-47, 549-50
  exports 18, 24
  Ghana Living Standards Survey 336
  health 343, 345, 350-51, 353, 358, 367, 479, 546
  historical 174, 178
  industrialization 513-14
  migration 187
  mineral production 31, 34-35
  population 170, 185-88, 186, 190-94, 196-97, 200-05, 479, 481, 507, 545-46, 548-50
  timber industry 509
  trade 170, 174, 178, 481, 492, 511, 546-47, 549-50
Statistics Africa: sources for social, economic and market research 546
'Stay by your radios': documentation for a study of military government in tropical Africa 387
Steel, W. F. 479, 514, 538
Steele, M. 312
Steiner, P. 102
Stephens, P. W. 351
Stern's guide to contemporary African music 690
Stevens, G. A. 625
Stewart, J. 750
Stewart, J. M. 258, 294, 302-03
Stockwell, J. 430
Stone, R. L. 131
Story of an African working class: Ghanaian miners' struggles, 1870-1980 540
Story of the Ashantee campaign 145
Story of Bob Johnson, Ghana's ace comedian 608
Strand, P. 14
Strange man 599
Strangers in African societies 241
Structural changes in the economy of Ghana, 1891-1911 495
Struthers, J. 472
Stryker, J. D. 511
Stryker, R. E. 384
Stuart-Macadam, P. L. 89
Stubborn 592
Studies in mental illness in the Gold Coast 346
Studies in power and class in Africa 385
Study guide for Ghana 757
Study of contemporary Ghana 467, 498
Study of the Ewe language 311
Study on African economies – their structure and outlook into the 1980s. Vol. 2, West Africa 481
Sub-Saharan Africa 336
Sub-Saharan Africa: from crisis to sustainable development, a long-term perspective study 484
Sub-Saharan African films and filmmakers: an annotated bibliography. . . . 673
Sub-Saharan African films and filmmakers: a preliminary bibliography 673

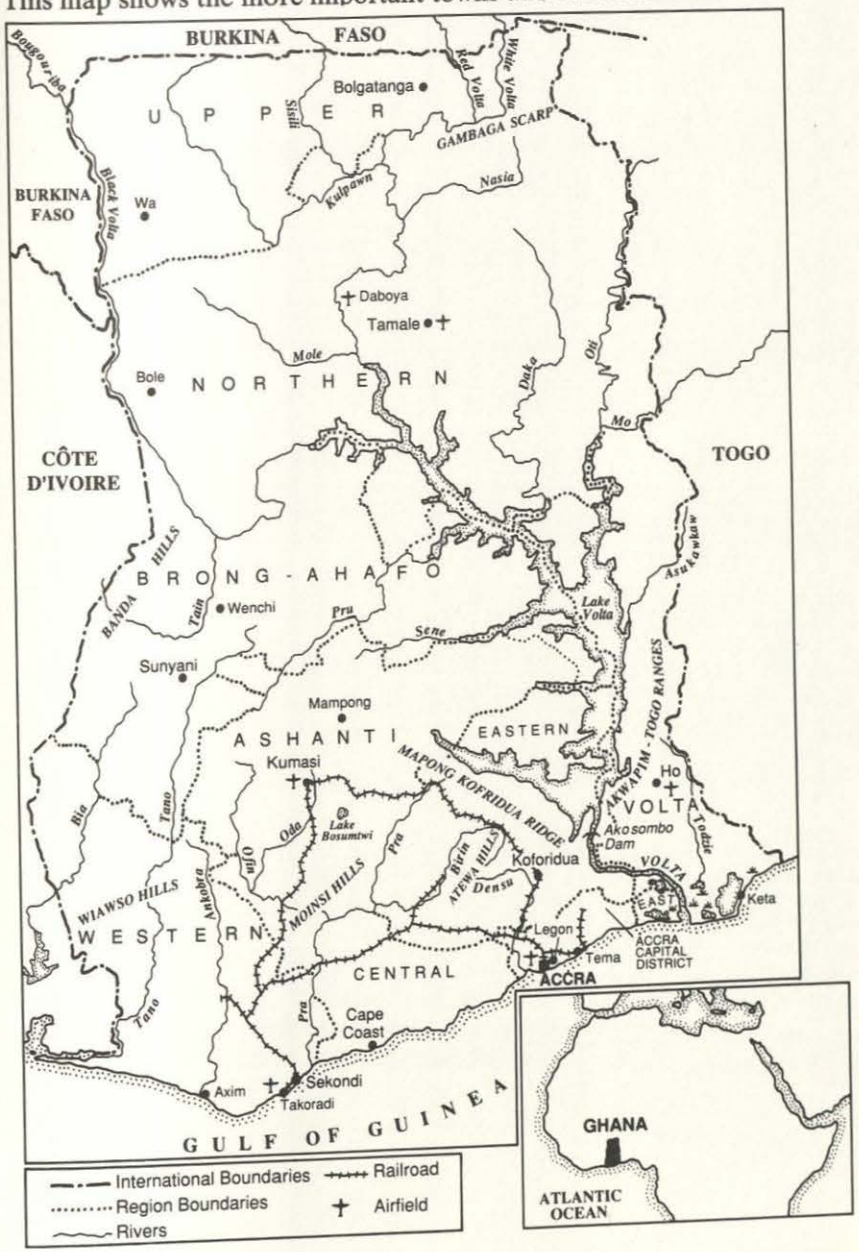
Houphouet versus Nkrumah 433
West African weaving 702
West Africa's colonial civil servants in the nineteenth century 123
Westermann, D. 287, 294-295, 311
Whetham, E. H. 498
Whitaker, D. P. 8
Whitby, P. 663
White, A. 350
White, E. I. 36
White, H. P. 18
White man: a study of the attitudes of Africans to Europeans in Ghana before independence 331
White press: the role of foreign-owned newspapers in Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone, 1946-65 729
Why are we so blest? 582
Whydah 95
  fort 166
Wilk, R. R. 471
Wilks, Ivor 105, 112, 122, 124, 148, 151, 155, 184-85, 212-13, 215, 237, 242, 248-52, 275, 290, 321, 716, 751
Willett, F. 626
Williams, C. 356
Williams, C. K. 551
Williams, G. 336
Williams, S. H. 627, 642
Willis, J. R. 140
Willner, D. 393
Wills, J. B. 536
Wilson, E. G. 667
Wilson, L. E. 266
Wilson, W. A. A. 303
Winful, E. A. 574
Winikoff, B. 356
Winneba 325
  festival 668
Wise, M. 719
Witchcraft 13, 114, 317
Witchcraft in Ghana: a study on the belief in destructive witches and its effect on the Akan tribes 317
Witherell, J. W. 713, 776
Wizard of Asaman 603
Wohl, J. 511
Wolcke, I. 741
Wolff, H. 569
Wolfson, F. 130, 708
Wolseley, Sir Garnet 143, 145
Woman in her prime 570, 603, 607
Woman of the aeroplanes 605
Women 5, 286, 328, 761
  of Accra 270, 335
  cocoa producers 489
  and the economy 471, 489
  entrepreneurial 559
  legal status 446
  market women 471
Women in Accra: options for autonomy 335
Women in Africa: studies in social and economic change 270
Women in the world: a comparative study 328
Women of northern, western, and central Africa: a bibliography, 1976-1985 328
Woodman, G. R. 447, 452
Woodson, C. D. 695
Woody plants of Ghana, with special reference to their uses 62
Word is here: poetry from modern Africa 575
World Bank 480-81
  adjustment programme 479
World Bank Atlas 507
World bibliography of African bibliographies 770
World development report 507
World economic growth 491
Worldmark encyclopedia of the nations 750
Worlds of music: an introduction to the music of the world's peoples 692
Woronoff, J. 433
Wraith, R. E. 183
Wright, D. 571
Wright, H. M. 98
Wright, M. 454
Wright, R. 103
Writer in modern Africa 585
Writing of Dangme: . . . word list 305
Wurapa, F. K. 344, 357
Wyllie, R. W. 325

Y

Yankah, K. 370, 570, 611
Yankay, K. 737
Yankey, G. S-A. 455
Yankey, J. E. K. 728
Yarak, L. W. 157, 215, 237, 242
Yeboa-Dankwa, J. 570
Yeboah, B. K. 200
Yeboah, K. 735
Yeboah-Afari, A. 366, 405, 564, 724
Yendi 165
Yirenkyi, A. 609
Yoder, P. S. 362, 365
York, R. N. 92
Young, C. 404
Younger, S. D. 349
Your guide to the Kumasi city 52
Ywumasi, Y. 733

Z

Zachariah, K. C. 200
Zagbede, J. 564
Zambia
  policy reform compared to Ghana 479
  traditional medicine 363
Zaslavsky, C. 211
Zell, H. M. 49, 725-27
Zemba, L. V. 5
Zimmermann, J. 295, 297
Zimmermann, R. 510
Zolberg, A. R. 384
Zongo, J-B. 349

Map of Ghana

This map shows the more important towns and other features.